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Editor's Note: Putting the Pieces Together

When we put together the call for Volume 22 of the *Berkeley Planning Journal: The City as a Problem Space*, we knew full well that we were casting a somewhat amorphous, and at least for the *BPJ*, unconventional net. We did not have a specific set of ideal submissions in mind, no checklist for writing style or methodology. Ours was a purposefully broad call, one that would put emphasis on good writing, research focus and provocative inquiries in an avenue for creative and erudite writing about planning and urbanism.

Previous thematic editions had relied on conventional organizing tropes in planning – sustainability, transportation, community development, regional economic development – or were unified by a particular geography such as Las Californias in Volume 21. In this issue, we took a rather speculative approach. It was our hope that the idea of a "Problem Space", a concept developed by Michel Foucault (1984) and cited by Paul Rabinow (2003:47), which refers to the process of turning a "given into a question" by making that which is evident and familiar "uncertain", would not only induce interesting responses but also facilitate a coherent structure for a set of submissions.

It was during the arduous process of sorting and editing that we began to see problem spaces in the plural, a fact that may seem obvious given the inherent plurality not only of cities, but also in cities. In this way, the notion of the "Problem Space" became a cohesive trope, but even more so, a loose metaphor allowing us to find connections, tensions, contradictions, and possibilities in dialogue among the different voices that would eventually populate this journal. Much as the urban can be represented in innumerable overlapping layers and combinations, the order of submissions we have set in place provides a snapshot inherent to the approach of thinking about the city as a problem space. We invite you, reader, to engage in your own exercise of regrouping the pieces that are presented in this journal.

Fieldwork

We begin the essay portion of this issue with an exercise of introspection which that draws a profile of the concept we aim to deploy; the problem space.

Pietro Calogero's *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Fieldwork* stands as a reflective essay on ethnic segregation and the ethics of urban research in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan. Calogero builds upon Horst Rittel and Melvin M. Webber's seminal essay *Dilemmas in a General Theory of*

Planning to illustrate a "wicked" problem he faces as both practitioner and researcher; the formulation of the problem delineates the range its of solutions. In the field, a place both real and imagined for anyone who engages in research and practice, Calogero struggles with expectations framed by a western liberal imagination; the same imagination which drives his aim to de-center planning theory towards a "transnational framework" which for the inclusion of rapidly urbanizing locations in so called Global South. Calogero's ethnographic intelligence is made strange during his sojourn in Kabul. He confronts norms and forms of ethnic segregation which are amply adopted, even advocated by minority ethnic populations. How then to engage in a project of transnational critique? By reflecting upon this apparent contradiction, this author takes the reader through threshold between careful observation and theoretical lucidity, where the ethics of planning theory becomes a nuanced question.

Legacies

As Calogero demonstrates to readers it is not uncommon to confront the legacy of those who, before us, were drawn to the city as a latent source of inquiry and action. From the realms of academia, policy, design, and activism, we gather the voices of those who have influenced discourse and practice to the point of reification. The submissions grouped in this problem space stand out for their ability to make some of the most recognizable legacies in planning practice and theory unfamiliar.

Jason Hayter's *Lessons from the Western Landscape* applies the imaginary of "The West" – its infrastructures, narratives, geographies and myths – in an interrogation of the rich genealogy that defines North American planning. By deploying a keen exploration through an otherwise neglected lens – The West – Hayter departs where Calogero's concludes in the goal of de-centering the production of urban epistemology. Instead of North Atlantic urban theory, Hayter takes aim at North American Planning theory and practice. Rather than attempting to deploy a transnational critique from the position of the "Global South", Hayter manages a domestic critique from the West. In his argument, Hayter registers the undetected urban-centric logic of North American planning theory and practice and de-familiarizes their vast legacies. By doing so, he asks urban scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider their inquiries and actions.

One such dominant legacy is the battle royale between Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses. In *Whose City is it Anyway? Jane Jacobs vs. Robert Moses and Contemporary Redevelopment Politics in New York City*, Scott Larson dissects the contemporary wave of historical revisionism applied to these dominant figures. Larson carefully illustrates how the intricate process of

re-writing the history of this conflict carries ethical and social consequences which aid the strategic deployment of development policies in New York City under the Bloomberg Administration. Beyond the apparent reconciliation of these legacies; Jacob's fine grained approach towards the "realization of goals" and Moses' "machinations of the master-plan", Larson argues that a design and policy frame promoting gentrification becomes normalized policy. The result is the brutal imposition of a hybrid place-making legacy over another legacy which remains underwritten and slowly fades away: The memory of social dispossession which has marked the history of urban development in New York City.

From New York City we travel to Vancouver British Columbia, where Serena Katoaka's *Vancouverism: Actualizing the Livable City Paradox* follows a similar path towards the de-familiarization of the "livable city" and its promise of healthy, diverse and civic oriented order through place-making practices. Kataoka analyses the relationship between Jane Jacob's brand of civic urbanism and Larry Beasley's marketable open spaces and green linkages. She uncovers how notions underpinning community and livability are manufactured by a specific design agenda. Yet for Kataoka, it is within this relationship of discourse and practice that an interesting paradox emerges. The livable city is also a dual city, hygienic, segregated and artificially diverse, where some of the worst aspects of suburban culture may in fact lie at the heart of downtown Vancouver. At the core of the livable city a balanced lifestyle gently blankets explosive violence and the threats of containment and exclusion.

Practicum

The critique of Vancouver's "Livable City" paradigm provides a bridge to the next problem space: the Practicum. These submissions were paired due to their argumentative focus on policy approaches that in turn de-familiarize critical urban theory by asking questions derived from practical implementation.

Daniel Roehr's & Isabel Kunigk's *Metro Vancouver: Designing for Urban Food Production* advocates for the implementation of food production as well as the role of landscape architects and planners in this endeavor. Roehr & Kunigk argue for urban agriculture techniques by proposing a combination of place-making design frameworks, education, and socio-economic development policy within the philosophy of the "Livable city" umbrella of Vancouver. This article seeks to influence policy makers and practitioners. While sharing the progressive path of Kataoka's article, *Metro Vancouver* it challenges its basic premise by articulating a specific scope: food access and equity. Readers are left with the question: How

are urban scholars and practitioners to negotiate the dualities of the "Livable City" paradigm? Dualities which offer the simultaneous closure and opening of both physical and intellectual spaces for progressive change?

The innate conflict between the ethics of practice and the ethics of the theory are brought to another level; state policy, in Taotao Matsui's *Consensus Building in Shopping District Associations and Downtown Commercial Re-vitalization in Japan.* This submission presents a comparative analysis of the Japanese model of placing responsibility for downtown commercial re-vitalization with incorporated Shopping District Associations (SDAs). In her analysis, Matsui qualifies three key criteria: diversity of membership, ownership succession and lack of mediation facilitators. The resulting comparison delineates the failure of the Japanese state in facilitating tools of consensus building among property owners. The expectations of the SDA model in planning and implementing re-vitalization projects remains institutionally unfounded through her analysis. By providing a clear comparison between two sites, Matsui's study implies a question which pushes the ethical dimension of this problem space. How to operate within the boundaries of inadequate policy measures derived from theoretical frameworks – as communicative action in this case – which are linked to positive and concrete results?

Public Space

The effects of state planning and urban policy are further explored in two articles centered on social exclusion and appropriations of public space as a source of political agency, activities with the capacity to de-stabilize state sponsored planning practice and attain democratic alternatives.

Reem Alissa's *Modernizing Kuwait: Nation-building and Unplanned Spatial Practices,* records the presence of immigrant laborers in Kuwait's public spaces. According to Alissa, in a country where the scale of urban planning encompasses national consolidation, planning has historically been used as a technology of rule to exclude immigrant workers from representation and citizenship. Ironically, as westernized conceptions of public space are transplanted to Kuwait, migrant workers become its main users. Cultural and environmental conditions make open air public spaces undesirable for wealthy nationals who would rather enjoy the leisure and consumption in secluded air conditioned malls. Alissa, exploits this uncanny contradiction to showcase the unexpected role of public place in the formation of an unexpected publics.

The next article demonstrates that the estrangement of normative notions of public space is not a phenomenon just relegated to the Persian Gulf.

It may lie amidst North American metropolises. Michael Rios' *Claiming Latina/o Space: Building Cultural Capacity in the Public Realm*, proposes an agenda in which the act of Latina/o identity formation in public spaces of American cities, carry the possibility of new democratic formations. In Rios' argument the evidence of Latino/a heritage and culture in spatial interventions, appropriations and practices represent a type of place-making activity that harnesses public participation and democratic politics. By focusing on the value of culture as a political capacity, Rios provides a place-making typology whereupon cultural identity becomes a usable resource for community development practice and local urban policy.

Visualities

As exemplified in Alissa's and Rios' articles, exclusionary power in cities is closely related to the degrees of visibility individuals have in public space. In the ensuing combination of papers, we re-address this notion by arranging two submissions which delve into how meaning about cities is depicted through processes of visual representation.

Joseph Godlewski's *A Tragicomic Tele-visual Ghetto* features the TV sitcom *Good Times* to decode a "Televisual Geography" of institutionalized racism. His argument analyses how the project of urban renewal is linked to the production of cultural perceptions that make it "common sense". Intersecting with Rios' *Claiming Latina/o Space* in its concern with identity politics, urban design and urban policy in American cities, this article presents a history of cultural translation which inherently actualizes racial relations and "conveys a view of the projects as an inherently failed space".

Randy Teal's *Residual Meaning: Assembling Thick Urbanism* uses a different palette of visuality – film – to call into question "systematic methodologies" that become primary means of engaging and developing cities. For him these approaches have led to a "formulaic treatment leading to a result that is necessarily thin because it takes good to be analogous and limited to order." Teal's approach mixes philosophy and urban theory to target urban design and architecture. To deal with this ideological gap he uncovers in the design practices, he calls for a professional "response" which would guide the practitioner towards a "thick" urbanism made of layers, histories, accidents and fragments. To look for the building blocks of a possible method, he refers readers to the films of Jim Jarmusch, cult classics such as *Ghost Dog; The Way of the Samurai* and *Night on Earth*. In their moving frames "complexities of a real situation" and "the imperfect, the less efficient, the odd", make places

that are truly human, truly "thick". By literally dis-placing the design practices to the space of cinema, Teal challenges practitioners to deploy the narrative power of moving images as determinants of place.

Branding

From the screen to the master-plan images provide powerful tools to re-imagine cities. Yet as the following problem space demonstrates, they can also supply the raw material for the consumption of place. The concluding problem space in this issue converges on submissions which analyze how the branding of urban space conjures a re-branding of urban theory.

Stefan Al's *Welcome to Theoretical Las Vegas* hinges upon a rather simple logic: Does the city of Las Vegas propose a theory of spectacle? Or rather, is the city the spectacle of theory? This article is almost ephemeral in its execution and style, collapsing depth and surface as it swirls through the contradictions Las Vegas poses for those attracted to its neon lights. Al works the reader as a dealer in blackjack. He deals her/him a deck of cards made up of a parade of discourses: Wolfe, Eco, Venturi, Baudrillard, and asks her/him to make a bet. As it turns out in games of chance – and perhaps theory – you loose and you win; his argument debunks theory as vulgar entertainment for the masses and then turns around to comment upon the ontological nature of the city's urbanism. When Al's game ends, the reader may find out that Las Vegas only exist as brand, where theme-park space is as urban as it gets. But wait, does this mean the end of the City? Maybe not, but perhaps Las Vegas is the best thing that has happened in urban theory since…Its suggestive case study may contribute theoretical clues for other cities with similar "eccentric" histories – Miami and Dubai among many others – where the real, surreal and hyper-real are constantly being re-shuffled.

The reader leaves the intoxicating scale of the city behind to take a walk through mundane scale of the street in Andrea Gaffney's *"JCDecaux as an Indicator of Globalization."* Instead of extravagant billboards, Gaffney is specifically interested in street furniture: transit shelters, benches, trash cans, kiosks and public toilets; the stuff of everyday ordinary pedestrian lives. In her analysis, however, these commonplace landscapes hide an extraordinary story not unlike the story of Las Vegas; JCDecaux's transformation from a subsidized street furniture company to a global advertisement giant. Gaffney maps JCDecaux's global brand, unveiling a diagram – perhaps a world order - exemplified by products and corporate partnerships. Throughout cities around the world the global and the local are blurred by the force of a homogenizing advertising brand…on street benches. As the urban world becomes interconnected in the form

of everyday street objects, Gaffney leaves the reader with a question: How can equity be negotiated in the public realm before the corporate entitlement of brands like JCDecaux?

Conversation: An interview with AbdouMaliq Simone

We are thrilled to anchor this issue with an interview by one of the most interesting and challenging urban scholars working today, AbdouMaliq Simone. His writings on African cities are widely read across disciplines and his seminal work on African cities: *For the City Yet to Come* has become indispensable on the bookshelves of contemporary urban writers and thinkers. His books, articles and positions papers intersect the fields of international development, social activism, ethnography and urban theory.

This interview presents a testimony which summarizes the myriad of undercurrents defining the problem spaces presented in this issue into a personal narrative of intellectual development: the dilemmas of in fieldwork, intellectual legacy, the value of practice, the ethics of policy, the production of knowledge, and the role of performance in urban theory, among others. This interview anchors the essays presented in this journal not only with the intention and hope that it provides some answers about Simone and his work, but ultimately that it also leaves others questions unanswered.

We have to recognize that one of the few assets we have at the BPJ is the capacity to harness a group of motivated individuals to edit a journal based on what we find to be interesting and relevant. We are proud of the fact that the editorial and design staff for this issue drew from throughout the College of Environmental Design, not simply from City Planning, a mixture well reflected in the pages of the journal. Since its founding, the Department of City Planning at Berkeley has shared physical space, if not always intellectual space, with architects, landscape architects and urban designers under the field of "environmental design," but in reality through an interest in and passion for people and places, for cities and the built environment. It is not the idea of problem spaces that brought them to the table, but our mutual passion for cities, a passion which spills out of the pages of the journal and our editorial board meetings and into the hallways and courtyards of Wurster Hall. We hope that this emphasis on urbanism continues to inform the work of this journal into the future, and that it becomes more and more of a collaborative space as time goes on.

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Berkeley, California. Summer 2009

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